INCOMING TELEGRAM Department of State

ACTION COPY

SECRET

EXCISE

Action

Info

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FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY
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S E C R E T SAIGON 23076

1967 APR 14 AM 8 13

EXDIS

REF: SAIGON 22498

1. [redacted] TOLD AN EMBOFF APRIL 13 THAT HE NOW BELIEVES GENERAL THIEU HAS COMPLETELY CHANGED HIS TUNE ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF BIG MINH'S RETURN TO RUN FOR PRESIDENT. [redacted] SAID HE IS SURE NOW THAT THIEU WAS JUST FLOATING THE IDEA TO TEST REACTIONS WHEN HE MADE THE STATEMENTS [redacted] REPORTED TO US EARLIER (REFTEL).

2. [redacted] BASES THIS IMPRESSION ON A SUBSEQUENT CONVERSATION WITH THIEU'S PRESS AIDE, AND ON THE FACT THAT THE STORY HE REPORTED TO US WAS QUICLY AND WIDELY CIRCULATED, APPARENTLY BY DESIGN. HE NOTED THAT THE STORY CLEARLY WORRIED KY'S SUPPORTERS, AND HE OBSERVED

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THAT IT WAS PROBABLY INTENDED TO DO JUST THAT.

3. [redacted] CALLED AGAIN ON THIEU AT THE HOSPITAL ON APRIL 12, AND ALTHOUGH THE SUBJECT OF BIG MINH DID NOT ARISE DURING THE CONVERSATION, HE DID DISCUSS IT AGAIN WITH THIEU'S PRESS AIDE, MAJOR LAM, BOTH BEFORE AND AFTER HIS EETING WITH THIEU. [redacted] BELIEVES THAT LAM IS "COMPLETELY A CREATURE" OF THIEU AND FAITHFULLY SAYS WHATEVER THIEU WANTS HIM TO SAY. HE THUS BELIEVES THAT LAM GAVE HIM THIEU'S CURRENT LINE.

4. ACCORDING TO [redacted], LAM ON APRIL 12 SAID THAT HE NOW THINKS BIG MINH IS TOO WEAK A PERSONABLITY TO MAKE A GOOD PRESIDENT. HE CONSTITUTION IS WRITTEN IN

SECRET

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY Sam Izenberg DATE 10/6/81
PORTIONS DENIED AS INDICATED

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WUCH A WAY AS TO DEMAND A STRONG MAN AS PRESIDENT, AND BIG MINH WOULD SIMPLY NOT FIT THE BILL. ASKED IF THIS WAS NOT A CHANGE SINCE [redacted] PREVIOUS VISIT, LAM SAID YES, THAT THEY HAD BEEN THINKING THE MATTER OVER SINCE THEN. LAMALSO SAID THAT, CONTRARY TO THE OPINION EXPRESSED BY THIEU IN THE FIRST INTERVIEW, HE NOW BELIEVES IT WOULD BE POSSIBLE TO PREVENT MINH FROM RETURNING TO VIET-NAM.

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5. REPORTS FROM OTHER SOURCES TEND TO SUPPORT [redacted] READING OF THIS SITUATION. WE HAD HEARD REPORTS OF BIG MINH'S POSSIBLE RETURN FROM FORMER MINISTER [redacted] AND [redacted] AMONG OTHERS. A KY SUPPORTER, WAS CLEARLY WORRIED ABOUT THE MATTER. HE SAID THAT THE SUBJECT WAS DISCUSSED AT THE APRIL 8 MEETING OF THE 1952 ALUMNI OF THE NAM DINH MILITARY ACADEMY (THIS GROUP INCLUDES KY, KHANG, LOAN, THANG, NGUYEN BAO TRI AND LOI AMONG ITS MEMBERS). [redacted] TOOK THE LINE THAT BIG MINH WOULD MAKE A VERY POOR PRESIDENT.

6. WE ARE INCLINED TO BELIEVE THAT THIEU'S REMARKS REPORTED REFTEL WERE INTENDED TO PPUT PRESSURE ON KY AND HIS SUPPORTERS AND POSSIBLY TO CAUSE US TO REVEAL OUR HAND. THIEU MAY HAVE THOUGHT THAT THE THREAT OF A BIG MINH TICKET WHICH EXCLUDED KY WOULD CAUSE KY TO AGREE TO A DEAL MORE FAVORABLE TO THIEU. OUR ATTITUDE WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO HIM IN ANY EVENT, BUT IF THIEU REALLY BELIEVES NO ONE CAN BE ELECTED WITHOUT OUR SUPPORT [redacted] IT WOULD BE A CRUCIAL QUESTION FROM HIS POINT OF VIEW. IT LOOKS NOW AS THOUGH HE HAS ABANDONED THE IDEA, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. LODGE
BT

NOTE: PASSED S/S-O, WHITE HOUSE, DOD, CIA 9:05 A.M., 4-14-67.

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